2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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243 much preparing. It is simply a portion of the field swept clean. It is sufficiently hard from the broiling sun, and a stake is driven into the centre of the circle. Two lines of sheaves are arranged round this, head to head, and the grain is trodden out by slow-moving bullocks in good old lazy fashion. The Christian Biblical precept, not to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, does not fail of observance with the Buddhist farmer. Then the paddy, that is, the unhusked grain, is winnowed. In some places hand-winnowing machines of a simple pattern are used; but ordinarily a far more primitive and easy method, corresponding to the substitution of oxen for threshing-flails, is in use. A man stands on an elevated platform and capsizes baskets of paddy brought from the threshing-floor; the rice falls on a sloping bamboo mat and so to the ground, the wind blowing away a great part of the bits of broken straw, chaff, and light grain. The system may not be very thorough, but it saves an immense amount of trouble, which is the chief consideration. All that now remains to be done is to carry the grain off to the big rice-boat lying in the creek. There it is stowed in bulk; and after a day or two, the farmer makes a start, dropping leisurely down through the network of creeks into one of the main streams, and so making his way to Rangoon, or Bassein, whence he will return in a few weeks with fine Chinese neckerchiefs for his daughters and perhaps a gay Manchester paso or two for himself and his sons—
[452] unless, indeed, the Madras money-lender has snapped up all
[674] his receipts down in town, or some of the robber-boats that infest the creeks at this time of the year have pounced upon him and carried off everything but the boat and the paddles.

243 427 433 435 Rice-farming would be profitable as well as easy work were it not for the reckless squandering of almost all the cultivators. The average rent per acre is under three shillings; the average produce of the land per acre is from eighty to a hundred bushels in the more fertile parts, while elsewhere the yield is from forty to fifty. The selling price of rice per maund (80 lbs.) in Rangoon is between 4s. 6d. and 5s. Agriculturists, therefore, ought to grow rich. But they are too fond of gambling and building works of merit

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to accumulate money, and their carelessness results in the constant death of their plough-beasts, so that matters usually remain exactly at the same level if the farmer does not actually get into permanent debt. The Scottish Highlanders have a pious wish, "May the free hand always be full!" If it is not always full in Burma it is consoling to think that it is seldom absolutely empty. Still, when the grandson succeeds he ordinarily finds that there is as little actual money hoarded up about the place as there was when the grandfather Po Gyi spent so many borrowed rupees at his uncle's funeral.

If rice cultivation is easy work in the low country, it is very different with the taung-ya, or hill clearings. Here the dense underwood and forest growth has to be cut down; and the more there is to cut the better the crop, for the soil needs fertilising badly, and all that is cut down is burned. Work is begun about January; everything is felled, bushes and all; and after the fallen logs have dried some time in the sun, the brushwood is heaped up round about them and the whole is set on fire. Some of the logs smoulder for weeks—perhaps till the first rains come. Then the ground is rudely dug up with hoes, and the ashes turned in. Cotton-seed is ordinarily mixed with the rice, which is of a quite different variety from that produced in the plains. It is sown broadcast, and the farmer has thereafter only to keep down the weeds, but this is not by any means a light task. The crop is ready by October, and furnishes little more than enough to support the family or community. The scanty manure provided by the wood-ashes is not sufficient to last more than two or three years; and when the crop is secured the party proceeds on to a new settlement, there to repeat the same laborious process. A very ingenious device for lightening the toil is resorted to where there is much heavy timber. Beginning at the bottom, they slightly cut the lowest trees on the upper side only, gradually increasing the depth of the notch as they advance up the hill, until at the top of the clearing they cut the trees completely through. These fall on the row immediately below them, and by their weight knock it down; and so the felling process is continued down to the bottom. Occasionally a tangle occurs

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655 651 Fytche, holding out the inducement of increased customs dues from the newly started Irrawaddy Flotilla Company's steamers, persuaded his majesty to give up all the monopolies, except those of earth oil, timber, and precious stones; and to agree to a uniform import and export duty on all other goods and merchandise, passing between British and Burmese territory, of five per cent *ad valorem*. This treaty lapsed in 1877 and was not renewed. Nevertheless, King Mindôn did not renew the monopolies.

When his son came to the throne, he issued, or there was issued for him, a proclamation, stating that he was going to adopt Western forms of government, and expressly announcing that he had no intention of reviving the monopoly system. He was, however, with his wild, extravagant habits, very soon in as great monetary difficulties as his father, and from 1880 began steadily to sell monopolies and give grants of forest land for hard cash payments. The new monopoly buyers, haunted by a fear of British interference, and not by any means assured in their minds as to the stability of Thibaw Min's rule, were anxious to get as much money as they could, and therefore paid only the ● [433] most absurdly low prices for produce. The cultivators, finding all their labour in vain, began consequently in large numbers to give up farming or working in the forests, the consequence of which was a still further shock to the trade with British Burma and an entire inability on the part of the 651 population the following year to pay the house-tax. Besides 525 the monopoly system derived from his predecessors, Thibaw Min also hit on the notion of lotteries for the replenishment of his treasury. The system worked very well for a time, and brought in great quantities of money, but latterly the loose coin of the populace had all been netted, and the lottery source of revenue was pretty nearly worked out. In 1879 and 1880 Mandalay was simply flooded with lottery-offices, each under the superintendence of a minister of high rank. Those who were able to show the king the most money were highest in the royal favour, and consequently the rivalry between these worthies ran very strong. All manner of dodges were tried to entice speculators away from all other offices to the minister's own. The Hpaung-wun,

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to hold his land free from taxes for such a period as may be necessary to bring it into a thorough state of cultivation. In such a case as this he has to apply to the thugyi—the old hereditary officers being retained throughout British Burma —of his circle, if the land does not exceed five acres in extent. If it is above that area, application has to be made to the English Assistant-commissioner, or to the Deputy-commissioner in charge of the district, if the average of the new claim exceeds fifty. The land is then surveyed and a grant is drawn up specifying the term of years during which he shall be free from imposts. This varies according to the kind of jungle which is to be cleared away, and the kind of crops intended to be grown. The exemption is in no case for less than a year. If rice is to be grown, seven years is the longest term of rent-free tenure, but for orchard cultivation it extends to twelve years. In a few cases, where the nature of the ground necessitates, in addition to clearing away the forest growth, the digging of channels for irrigation, and the erection of dams, extension even of this long period is granted. As in France, Norway, Japan, and Switzerland, the farms are all very small, in some cases almost absurdly so. Along the old frontier the holdings averaged only about five acres, in the Rangoon district from sixteen to twenty acres is the ordinary size, but here and there are a few considerably larger. It would, however, be a great mistake to endeavour to introduce larger tenancies. It is entirely against the genius of the people, and the appearance of foreign capitalists could not be otherwise than disastrous. The present mode of cultivation is slovenly enough, and larger farms would most certainly not tend to remedy the defect, which is due in great part to the superabundance of available arable land lying waste. Burma is progressing fast enough as it is. The abundance of rich land, the facility with which rights over it can be acquired, the great demand for rice, and the ever-increasing counter demand for European goods, the fixed, though heavy taxation, the cessation of all irregular and unexpected collections, the absolute personal security enjoyed by all under the English administration: all these benefits have resulted in the trebling of the population of Lower Burma during twenty-six years since the annexation of Pegu;

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in the more than trebling of the trade—the value of the sea-borne merchandise alone having doubled and reached twelve and a half millions sterling during the ten years previous to 1881—and in the wonderful increase in revenue, which makes Burma the most valuable of all the provinces under the Indian Government. Now that all Burma is one province the increase of revenue and the contribution paid to the Imperial Government have gone on increasing with a regularity which is almost automatic.

14: Brant E-5 (1949-50) 1954 AP1 Burma
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244 Garden cultivation is quite simple. Hand tools, such as steel mattocks, rakes and hoes, which are obtained from Rangoon, are employed to prepare the soil. Cattle or water buffalo excrement is mixed with water to a thin consistency and poured from bamboo-spouted metal buckets over the ground. (The use of human excrement as a fertilizer, common in China and Japan, is not practiced in Burma.) During the monsoon season there is, of course, no problem of irrigation, but during the hot and dry seasons the gardens must be watered frequently. This task is often performed by young boys, who draw water from the wells and apply it to the gardens. The work of picking the matured crops and preparing them for transport to market is commonly done by female members of the household.

243 2. Paddy Cultivation. The principal occupation of forty-three persons is cultivation of paddy. This category is here defined to include individuals who own or rent land on which they cultivate paddy, as distinct from persons who work on a wage basis in the paddy cultivation of others. The latter are referred to in this report as field laborers.

243 162 427 178 Of the thirty-four paddy land holdings on which we have data, twenty-nine are rented and five are owned by the cultivators. All but one of these holdings is under twenty acres. This high ratio of renters to owners, as well as the small number of paddy cultivators relative to the total number of gainfully occupied villagers, is reflective of long-run trends in agriculture in this general area. Rural tenancy has been the outcome, in Lower Burma, of a long period of loss of land ownership to moneylenders, largely absentee, through inability of the cultivators to repay loans taken out at very high rates of interest. As tenancy has grown apace, individual cultivators have become discouraged with their small return for hard work. Accordingly, many have given up paddy cultivation altogether in favor of less arduous and relatively more rewarding occupations. However, this trend may be reversed, for there began in early 1951 actual implementation of the Land Nationalization Act of 1948, which provides for distribution of agricultural land to the cultivators on an individual ownership basis.

243 431 For the great majority of the paddy cultivators of Tadagale it is possible to eke out little more than subsistence from season to season. A few, after paying their hired labor, putting aside seed for the next year's planting, and filling the granary for home use, can realize some cash income by the sale of a small surplus of paddy. If the cultivator with a little surplus can possibly afford it, he holds the paddy until the hot season, when the market price is highest.

243 433 The average yield per acre in Tadagale, based on data for thirty cultivators for the harvest season 1948-49, is 19.8 bushels of paddy. This compares closely with the overall average figures for Burma. According to the Yearbook of Food and Agriculture for 1949 (U.N.-F.A.O.) the average yield per acre in Burma was 20 bushels.

243 437 In late March, the paddy fields of Tadagale are burned over, depositing an ash from any stubble remaining from the previous harvest. Sometime after the New Year celebration (which begins about April 13th and continues several days) the cultivators spread manure over their fields in preparation for the coming planting season. The manure is obtained from the Indian dairy farmers of the village in exchange for paddy stalk.

565 basis of invidious distinctions. Persons of means are esteemed more for the
556 socially valued uses to which they may put their money, such as charity, ceremonial activities, and support of the clergy, than for sheer richness or consumption.

Economic Change

178 The changing pattern of Tadagale's economic life may be described from the
101 point of view of shift from a once largely subsistence economy to one based more
●433 upon commodity production and exchange. In discussing this shift, the general trends are best indicated if we focus upon Lower Burma rather than upon Tadagale exclusively. It is desirable to make this large area our unit because pertinent data are available for it, whereas historical information specific to the village is somewhat scant and fragmentary. The term "Lower Burma" is an administrative and geographical one. It comprises about 81,000 square miles and a population of some 9 millions, four of the administrative divisions in the highly fertile, deltaic 'rice-bowl' of Burma.

178 1. Background. The trend from a relatively self-sufficient subsistence
433 economy, with little dependence upon money, to a more commercialized economy coincides with the coming of British colonial rule in Burma. Our historical perspective thus extends over a period of about 150 years. Within this span of time, profound economic change occurred in Lower Burma. Here we cannot give a detailed account of events from decade to decade, but must limit ourselves to a brief consideration of the major trends.

175 In pre-British Lower Burma, villages consisted of what might be called
433 islands of clearance in a big jungle. In these settlements the Burmese peasants
361 lived by cultivation of paddy and vegetable gardens. Individual small holdings were the rule, and the size of the plot depended almost entirely upon need. No incentive existed to clear and cultivate land beyond the requirements of household subsistence and taxes, paid in kind, to the representative of the Burmese Crown. Cotton, from the dry zone of central Burma, was spun and woven into cloth, and garments were made in the local community. Housing was of a simple bamboo and thatch type, made of materials available locally. The bullock cart provided transport on the relatively few occasions that it was necessary for the Lower Burma villager to travel distances that could not be walked. Contact between villages was minimized by the expanses of intervening, uncleared jungle country. In Tadagale, for example, one of our oldest informants was able to recall the period of his youth, around 1885, when jungle clearance and settlement was still taking place, bringing Tadagale into closer communication with other communities in the area. Local craftsmen provided the villagers with simple utensils, tools and implements.

178 When British colonialism took over, money came to dominate over barter.
433 Taxation was ordered to be paid in money. The Burmese cultivator was encouraged
436 to clear the heavy jungle, cultivate more land, sell surpluses of paddy to
456 commercial millers, and spend his money on attractive manufactured goods imported from England, which were on display in the town shops and bazaars. Moneylenders, some of them Burmese, but especially Indians of the moneylending Chettiar caste from Madras, who could enter Burma freely, were at hand to loan money in fairly unlimited amounts to the Burmese peasants. Thus the latter could finance the expansion of their cultivation. Rates of interest charged were unregulated, and commonly ranged from 10% to 35% per year. The Burmese peasant was an easy victim: he was, at first, entirely unsophisticated in money

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An increase has occurred in the number of individuals engaged in small-scale middleman trading. Such manufactured items as candles, mats, jewelery, and books are bought in Rangoon and sold increasingly in the village and nearby.

Wage labor of an unskilled sort has increased. Some villagers have found jobs in a warehouse in Rangoon, others in a mental hospital not far from the village. A very small number have become office and clerical workers.

Unemployment is said to be a new development, although these people are only a few.

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b. Resources. Both cultivated land and grazing land resources have declined. The grazing land is very badly eroded, with little grass left. Fishing resources remain steady; the large Pazundaung Creek at the eastern edge of the village yields as many fish as ever.

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c. Imports. There has been a decrease, as indicated earlier, in the amount of Burma-grown cotton that comes into the village for making of clothing. A variety of miscellaneous food items, such as salt, dried chilis, cigars, cooking oil, betel, potatoes, onions, and various spices are obtained from the outside as much as in the past. Increasingly sought beyond the village are building materials, housewares of all types, clothing, and medicine.

d. Exports. The amount of rice sold has declined, while the sale of cooked foods, fresh vegetables, labor and services has increased.

In 1949-50 the villagers of Tadagale felt that their economic lot had worsened over the preceding several years, owing to the aftermath of World War II and the instability prevailing in Burma. The most pressingly felt needs were for land and the curbing of inflationary high prices, and hope was expressed that the plans of the national government in these and other matters might bring some measure of relief.

16;Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
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Such is a great feast at a great pagoda.

But whenever I think of a great feast, whenever the growing autumn moon tells me that the end of Lent is drawing nigh, it is not the great feast of the Shwe Dagon, nor of any other famous pagoda that comes into my mind, but something far different.

It was on a frontier long ago that there was the festival that I remember so well. The country there was very far away from all the big towns; the people were not civilized as those of Mandalay or of Rangoon; the pagoda was a very small one. There was no gilding upon it at all, and no shrines were about it; it stood alone, just a little white plastered pagoda, with a few trees near it, on a bare rice-field. There were a few villages about, dotted here and there in the swamp, and the people of these were all that came to our festival.

For long before the villagers were preparing for it, saving a little money here, doing a little extra work there, so that they might be able to have presents ready for the monks, so that they might be able to subscribe to the lights, so that they would have a good dress in which they might appear.

The men did a little more work at the fields, bamboo-cutting in the forest, making baskets in the evening, and the women wove. All had to work very hard to have even a little margin; for there, although food—plain rice—was very cheap, all other things were very expensive. It was so far to bring them, and the roads were so bad. I remember that the only European things to be bought there then were matches and tinned milk, and copper money

16 Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
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was not known. You paid a rupee, and took the change in rice or other commodities.

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The excitement of the great day of the full moon began in the morning, about ten o'clock, with the offerings to the monks. Outside the village gate there was a piece of straight road, dry and open, and on each side of this, in rows, were the people with their gifts; mostly they were eatables. You see that it is very difficult to find any variety of things to give a monk; he is very strictly limited in the things he is allowed to receive. Garments, yellow garments, curtains to partition off corners of the monasteries and keep away the draughts, sacred books and eatables—that is nearly all. But eatables allow a very wide range. A monk may accept and eat any food—not drink, of course—provided he eat but the one big meal a day before noon; and so most of the offerings were eatables. Each donor knelt there upon the road with his or her offerings in a tray in front. There was rice cooked in all sorts of shapes, ordinary rice for eating with curry, and the sweet purple rice, cooked in bamboos and coming out in sticks. There were vegetables, too, of very many kinds, and sugar and cakes and oil and honey, and many other such things. There were a few, very few, books, for they are very hard to get, being all in manuscript; and there were one or two tapestry curtains; but there were heaps of

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flowers. I remember there was one girl whose whole offering was a few orchid sprays, and a little, very little, heap of common rice. She was so poor; her father and mother were dead, and she was not married. It was all she could give. She sat behind

also used to do this. Sometimes they are able to extract about 5 viss of oil each in one day. 226 463 621

"There are also cultivators in the village. Some of those who work IRS also own fields. They rent out the land to tenants. There are altogether 12 people in our village who own cultivation fields. But the biggest landowner does not own lands more extensive than three hundred acres. Some own 40 or 50 acres. Some engage cultivators and work their fields themselves, while others rent out the fields for a certain percentage of the produce. 421 463 621 427

"There were paid workers in the IN. They were paid, not a daily wage, but a monthly salary of Rs. 30/- without food. About 30 of the 80 workers were paid workers, though some of them owned shares as well. In addition to their pay, these paid workers received quite a lot of fish which their families went around selling. They get one or two basket-loads of fish to sell, and in this way make quite a lot of money. 226 463 465

"Fish is not distributed in this manner every day - only when the fish start coming down in great numbers. On these occasions however the workers get about 25 to 30 viss each - that is, by the boatload. Ordinarily they are given just enough for one meal.

"I also own eleven cows; eight for loaning out to cultivators and three for breeding purposes. No milk is drawn for human consumption because that is not the custom in our native place." 231 [272]

One yoke of oxen hired out brought U Myaing 50 baskets of paddy a year. He had 4 yokes. They kept by 100 baskets for home consumption and sold the rest at a rate fluctuating between Rs. 100/- and Rs. 175/- per hundred baskets.

In those years when U Myaing works at IRS, he has to confine himself to such work only. During those years when he does not work at IRS, he buys the fish from IN workers and process them for sale as NGAGYI, NGA-CHAUK, etc. Each year he uses between four to five thousand fish. When U Myaing his co-workers could not get an IN, he had to buy fish and make NGA-CHAUK, (dried fish), NGAPI and NGAPYAR-YE. 226 463 433

On his former visits to Rangoon U Myaing came in a boat loaded with NGAGYI CHAUK (dried NGA GYI) and transferred it to the care of a broker in Rangoon. He then ascended the Shwe Dagon pagoda platform, donated money and water, returned to the broker, and went around the town to places like Mogul Street (the Indian quarter) for meats and ate pillau-rice etc. It took three or four days, and sometimes about ten days for the broker to dispose of his goods and in this time he would go round all the pagodas in Rangoon like the Botataung, Sule, Kyauktawgyi etc. Once he went to a Chinese hotel known as the NAN-HIN hotel together with some traders from DABEIYU. They pooled the expenses. The journey home took a day and a night. He took back with him clothes, longyis, KINGYIS, durian fruit, 226 438 484 [778]